

Early symptoms associated with the common cold, influenza, and inhalation anthrax may be similar. This can delay timely diagnosis and appropriate treatment. The following table was constructed to help clarify some of the differences. Influenza is still an important cause of death and should be taken seriously. A person's susceptibility to illness varies with several factors such as: age, general health, lifestyle and immune status. If symptoms do not improve or worsen or if you think you have been exposed to anthrax – consult with your physician.

Remember, the common cold and the flu are contagious; prudent hand washing can help prevent the transmission of many illnesses.

I. Typical Symptoms

“COLD”	FLU (Influenza)	Inhalation ANTHRAX
Runny nose, sneezing, nasal congestion	Runny nose, sneezing	A runny nose is typically not observed
Sore throat	Sore throat with headache	Not typically observed
Cough	Cough (might experience shortness of breath.)	Cough 90% of cases; shortness of breath
No fever or low grade fever	Fever (generally > 101° F with chills)	Fever and chills common
Mild fatigue	Moderate to severe fatigue and weakness.	Fatigue/malaise
No muscular aches	Muscular aches (myalgia)	Chest pain/pleuritic-type pain
No nausea or vomiting	Nausea and/or vomiting	Nausea and/or vomiting

II. Causative Agent:

One of more than 200 viruses cause 2 to 4 colds a year in adults and 4 to 8 a year in children.	One of a few viruses from the Influenza A or B family; on average, adults have less than one infection a year.	<i>Bacillus anthracis</i>
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III. Seriousness:

Usually not serious except in people with lung disease or other illness.	Can be serious. A special concern in senior citizens, healthcare workers, immunocompromised individuals, and individuals with chronic health conditions.	Very serious. Life threatening if not treated with antibiotics.
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IV. Medical Treatment (Antibiotics/Antiviral)

Not helpful unless you have a secondary bacterial infection.	Sometimes, two antiviral antibiotics are available, but they only work for Type A Influenza.	Yes. Doxycycline, Ciprofloxin, or penicillin.
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V. Self-Care

<p>Drink plenty of fluids; traditional “folklore” still recommends a nice bowl of hot chicken soup to help clear nasal passages.</p> <p>Increase sleep and rest. Consider stress reduction/relaxation techniques to sustain and promote a healthy immune system response.</p> <p>Use cold or flu remedies or any over-the-counter pain relievers cautiously.</p> <p>See a Doctor if symptoms persist for longer than 7 days or if any unusual symptoms develop.</p>	No self-care indicated. If you believe you have been exposed to anthrax (e.g., you’ve seen a powdery substance in an envelope or other unexpected location) then you must report to a hospital immediately for evaluation and treatment.
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VI. Prevention

Prudent hand washing, not sharing food, towels, eating utensils, etc.	Heightened vigilance - especially with suspicious packages or envelopes.
Good nutrition, regular exercise and adequate sleep are always important lifestyle recommendations.	Prudent hand washing. Avoid food in work area that could become contaminated and cause gastrointestinal anthrax.
No immunization exists.	Anthrax vaccination is limited to high-risk personnel and is not currently available to the general public.
Flu vaccination exists only for the prevalent strain; will not protect from all strains.	